

# The Standard Bearer

**A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE**

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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*Meditation***Kept from the Hour of Temptation**

*Rev M. Schipper*

*"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."*

*Revelation 3:10*

I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation! A promise of the Lord to the Church in Philadelphia, one of the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom the seer of Patmos is ordered by the Lord in a vision to write a letter. But a promise, too, to the church of Christ throughout this present dispensation! For the

Church in Philadelphia along with the other six is envisioned here as symbolically picturing the church in all ages, while *per se* all seven were historical churches situated geographically in the western area of Asia Minor at the time that the Apostle John received the vision.

Actually the Lord, Who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and holding the seven stars in His hand, gives three promises to the Church in Philadelphia. The Lord Who holds the key of David and Who openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth, Who is holy and true, will set before this church an open door. He will bless her faithful preaching so that it bears fruit. So that those who had always opposed the gospel will be converted and brought into the church. This is the first promise. The Lord also promises to those who overcome to make them pillars in the temple of God and to write upon them the name of His God and of the city of His God, the new Jerusalem. Then in our text He promises those who have kept the word of His patience that they shall be kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world.

Promise to the Church in Philadelphia!

Which, along with the Church in Smyrna, distinguishes herself in being most faithful, and meriting no rebuke of the Lord. The Lord, Who always observes minutely the conduct of His church in the world, and Who judges inerrantly the true worth of that church, has only commendation for the Church in Philadelphia. This church had little strength, that is, she was numerically small, and had no great material wealth wherein to boast; and therefore, according to the standard of the world, she was not much to admire and with little physical power to attract those who set their hope on an arm of flesh. Nevertheless, by the grace of Christ, she is found faithful by the Lord. She had kept the word of Christ both in doctrine and in walk, even when there was much temptation to deny it. For this church had suffered much at the hands of those whom the Lord calls "the synagogue of Satan" — anti-Christian Judaism. She had kept the word of Christ's patience, which is the whole Word of God as it requires patience to keep it, which can only mean that while there was much temptation to deny it because of intense persecution, she nevertheless continued faithfully to confess it.

This church shall be kept!

From the hour of temptation!

The temptation concerning which the Lord speaks has reference no doubt to the trial and tribulation which the church may expect shall be imposed upon her by the world because she is faithfully keeping Christ's word of patience. No doubt, too, this had immediate significance for the Church in Philadelphia. For this church, as well as for all the faithful in Christ throughout the world, the clouds of tribulation and persecution were beginning to gather which presently would burst in a torrent of trouble and affliction for the saints of God. But, undoubtedly too, this prediction of the Lord has reference to tribulation and trial associated with the coming and establishment of the kingdom of Antichrist toward the end of this dispensa-

tion. Then, according to Scripture, the tribulation will become so intense that, had not the Lord shortened the days, the very elect of God would be tempted to forsake the word of Christ's patience, leave the path of obedience, and go lost.

That the Lord says He will keep His church from the hour of temptation, cannot mean that she will not be in it. This is, indeed, the false and dangerous philosophy of some who maintain that the Lord will whisk away the faithful in the so-called rapture before the days of tribulation come. This doctrine is false because it denies the general teaching of Christ and the Word of God that "in the world ye shall have tribulation." It is dangerous doctrine because it relaxes the Christian to the point where he is not prepared for tribulation. He will not be putting on the whole armor of God so that he can stand in the evil day.

Nay, rather, the church must expect this hour of temptation which she shall be required to endure. That the trial and tribulation is spoken of in terms of temptation is due to the fact that the trial will be so severe and the tribulation so intense that unless the church is kept by the Lord she would be tempted to forsake her faithfulness to the Lord. But here is exactly her consolation that according to the promise of the Lord He will not allow her to succumb and to be overcome, — He will bring her out of it. Consolation there is, too, in the fact that it is "the *hour* of temptation"; which can only mean that the period of trial and tribulation, and therefore of temptation will not be long. It endures only for an hour. Like the three friends of Daniel, therefore, the church must expect to enter the burning, fiery furnace; but also like them, the Lord promises to bring His church out of that furnace.

I will keep thee!

None other is He that promises than the Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. He Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Who testifies that He liveth, and was dead, and, behold, He is alive forever more! Who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty! Who is coming with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, they also who pierced Him, and because of Whom all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. He it is Who has the keys of hell and of death. He it is Who is holy and true, and therefore cannot fail to keep His promise.

He it is Who will preserve His church in the hour of temptation. Not, as the above translation of the text has it, will He keep *from* the tribulation, and as the Chiliast would have us believe; but as the original text expresses it — He will keep His church *out of* the hour of temptation. What comes out of something must first have been in it. The meaning is that He will attend to carefully, and thus guard and keep His church in such a

way that she will be preserved and guided out of the tribulation which shall come upon the whole inhabited world for to try all those dwelling upon the earth. Here the Lord connects up the trial of His Church in Philadelphia with the tribulation of His church in all the world. So that there is a unity of the church also in suffering. So that also whether that tribulation was a period of persecution at the time, or whether it refers to tribulation throughout this dispensation and culminating in the "great tribulation" under Antichrist at the end of time, the suffering church of which the Church in Philadelphia was a type, shall be preserved.

Assuring promise!

Given by the faithful Lord!

Given to the faithful church!

As a reward for faithfulness!

O, indeed, the Lord observes the walk and conduct of His church in the world. In no uncertain terms He informs His church: I know thy works!

Never is it so that Christ's church in the world goes unnoticed, unobserved by Him. Though the suffering church in the world may sinfully conclude that the heavens are of copper, and her cries cannot penetrate to the ears of Her Advocate; though often it may seem to her that her Lord is so highly exalted above her that His omniscient eye cannot behold her sorrowful condition, — He informs her that He hears, and He sees. Moreover, He not only hears and sees, but also judges her every deed. When the church loses her first love, when she follows after the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, when she becomes mystical and not spiritual, when she becomes lax in discipline, or when she becomes lukewarm, — He observes this too. And He is quick to warn His church of her deficiencies and call her to repentance. But the opposite is also true. When the church is faithful, when she fights the good fight of faith, when her garments become stained with blood in the midst of tribulation because she faithfully preaches the Word and lives according to the doctrines of the Scriptures, and opposes the vain philosophy of the men of the world, — then He observes this too. And such was the case with the Church in Philadelphia.

Because thou hast kept the word of My patience!

I also will keep thee!

This is the rule in the kingdom of heaven!

The faithful church receives reward for her faithfulness! She had kept the word of Christ's patience. That is, she had kept the word of Christ which requires patience. And patience is that grace of God communicated by Christ to His church whereby she is enabled to stand up under the severest trial and oppression without giving up. It is that grace of endurance which

refuses to capitulate to the enemy when under the threat of death he would seek to force you by brute strength to acquiesce to his will. Patience is that grace of God in us that remains standing when all the din and the smoke of the battle has dissipated.

Though God in the Scriptures is said to possess the attributes of longsuffering and forbearance, you never read of God's patience. But this is a grace He gives to His people. Unto this patience we are constantly exhorted in His Word. That the text speaks of the word of Christ's patience also refers to the truth which Christ drilled into His disciples, namely, that in the world they would be required to suffer and in that suffering they must endure, and in the way of this endurance they shall obtain the crown.

This word of Christ the Church in Philadelphia had obeyed. In the midst of all her tribulation she clung fast to it. The very word of Christ stirred up the grace of patience which was in them into action. Never did this church bemoan the fact that she was small and powerless; nor did she throw up her hands in defeat because the oppression of the enemy was too great; nor did the faithful criticize the Lord for allowing the opposers of His truth to inflict on them reproach and shame, and suffering. They could even glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope — the hope that maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. (Romans 5:3-5). They knew also that the trying of their faith worketh patience, and were willing to let patience have her perfect work, that they might be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. (James 1:3, 4). In one word, they lived out of the doctrine of Christ, that they who patiently endure shall receive the crown of life that fadeth not away.

The church was concerned with keeping Christ's word! She was not concerned with outward growth, though, no doubt, she desired to see the fruit on her preaching. She was not concerned with carnal ease, though, no doubt, she often sighed in the midst of her tribulation. But she made it her principle for existence to keep the word of Christ's patience. She lived consciously out of the grace of patience while constantly she was beset on every side and pressed down with sorrow and pain.

And the Lord says to her, because you have done this, and have proved yourself to be faithful, I shall also reward you with preservation and deliverance.

The reward also of grace!

Assured victory!

Incentive to the church of all ages to be faithful!

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Before men one may talk of coming to Jesus as if it were in the power of the sinner to come or to refuse to come. But as soon as one places himself before the face of God all this is changed. Then all is attributed to divine grace.

## Editorials

### EDITOR'S NOTES

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

*Textual Index.* There is nothing very glamorous about a textual index; it contains a large number of statistics, and it represents a great amount of tedious and painstaking labor. Yet a good index can be a very helpful item and a big time-saver for anyone doing research, especially over a span of 45 volumes of a periodical such as our *Standard Bearer*. Such an index (1970 issue), covering the first forty-five volumes of our magazine, has been prepared by Mr. T. Elzinga. By a rough estimate, there are close to 4000 entries in this textual index. The references are from all but one book of the Old Testament and all but two books of the New Testament. This not only gives the reader an idea of the range of Scripture passages covered in these forty-five volumes of *The Standard Bearer*, but also an indication of the value of a textual index for anyone who possesses part or all of these past volumes and who wishes to check up on what has been written on a given passage of Scripture. What is more, brother Elzinga is offering copies of this type-written index free of charge to those requesting such copies of him. For those interested, here is his address:

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567 West 19th St.,  
Holland, Michigan 49423

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*Graduation.* No, there was no seminary graduation this year; but this is written with a view to *future* seminary graduations. For there must have been several young men throughout our Protestant Reformed denomination who graduated from high school this year. Congratulations to you (and to the young women, too!) if you were among those graduates! But this is not really my point. Briefly, my point is to remind our young men to consider seriously whether the Lord directs you to prepare for the ministry in our churches. If you find that this is the case, then I urge you to lay some careful plans as to your future schooling, — whether you intend to take all your pre-seminary training in some college and to get a degree, or whether you intend to take at least part of your pre-seminary training in our own Protestant Reformed seminary. Find out what subjects you need in order to qualify for admission to the seminary. Consider the possibility of taking part of your pre-sem training in our seminary. Consult your pastor, or correspond with the seminary faculty. If you are curious about our seminary, write for a catalogue and/or “talk things over” with some of our present students. But I urge you: if you are

looking toward seminary, plan your program of pre-sem work now!

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*Publication News.* As announced earlier, the next big publishing project on the docket of our R.F.P.A. Publications Committee is a reprint of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's 10-volume Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism. Work has been completed on correction of the typographical errors in the first three volumes of this work, and we will soon be ready to go to press with the first new volume. This first volume of the reprint will contain the first three volumes of the original set, namely: *In the Midst of Death, God's Way Out*, and *The Death of the Son of God*. This volume of approximately 700 pages will cover Lord's Days 1-16 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Publication is scheduled now for early fall. We hope to follow this as soon as possible by Volume Two, which will include Volumes 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the original set; and Volume Three, which will include Volumes 8, 9, and 10 of the original set, will follow as soon as possible thereafter. When this is completed, this entire valuable set will again be available. Plans are to sell these at as reasonable a price as possible. Watch for further announcements and for a pre-publication sale!

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*Survey Suggestions.* At our recent annual Staff Meeting our Survey Committee reported on the results of the mail survey of our readership which was taken this spring. Among the several valuable suggestions made by our readers were two which occurred several times. One was that *The Standard Bearer* should have a Question Box, and the other was that we should have an Open Forum. The staff is in favor of both of these items. But we also wish to remind our readers that we already have both of them. The difficulty is that there is only one group of persons able to *activate* these departments in our magazine, namely, YOU, THE READERS. A Question Box must have questions sent in before there can be answers. Please send them; we will do our best to answer! An Open Forum must have contributors; and these, too, are welcome — of course, within the rules of journalistic ethics and within the limits prescribed in the masthead in the inside front cover of every issue. Hence, it is up to YOU!

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In this issue we welcome back to his old post in the Meditation Department the Rev. M. Schipper, after an absence of a few issues due to illness. We are thankful to the Lord that He has restored our brother to his labors in our churches and in our *Standard Bearer*.

# ACT — A Contemporary Translation of the Bible

Recently a reader of *The Standard Bearer* sent me a copy of the *Gospel According to John, A Contemporary Translation*, produced by the Committee on Bible Translation, associated with the New York Bible Society. Some of our readers may already know that Dr. Edwin Palmer, formerly pastor of Grandville Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, is now associated with this project. This little booklet of the Gospel According to John is the first published portion of *The Holy Bible: A Contemporary Translation* (ACT). The above-mentioned reader asked for my comments on this sample of the projected translation; and because this subject of Bible translations and versions is one of rather general interest, these comments are being offered in *The Standard Bearer* rather than by private correspondence.

The booklet containing the Gospel according to John has a preface which explains this translation project. Though this preface is somewhat long, I will quote it in full before offering any comments either on it or on the sample translation, in order that the reader may have some idea of the aims and claims of this new translation:

The Gospel of John here offered to the public is the first portion of *The Holy Bible: A Contemporary Translation* (ACT).

ACT presents the Bible in today's idiom. Traditional language may be beautiful, and its familiarity may be comfortable to many, but the Word of God should not remain shrouded in archaisms — however beautiful — which shut it off from living communication with those who know only the English of current conversation and literature.

ACT is not a revision of any previous translation. Readers will now and then detect similarity of expression between this and other versions they have known. Such agreements in phraseology have neither been sought, nor studiously avoided. The translators have made it a matter of policy not to strive for the new and unusual for its own sake. Their primary concern has been to produce a translation that is as faithful as possible and that, at the same time, speaks the language of our day so naturally as to make the Word of God once more familiar.

The work of preparing ACT is a cooperative effort involving hundreds throughout the English-speaking world. Scores of Biblical scholars are serving as translators, consultants and critics. The broad spectrum of Christianity which they represent serves as an effective safeguard against sectarian bias. One conviction, however, they have in common: they hold their task to be a sacred trust to honor the Bible as the inspired Word of God. English stylists are adding their counsel to the project and often help to shape the idiom to give it clarity, vitality and beauty. An advisory board of Christian leaders gives constructive criticism. And men, women and children of every station of life are

testing the translation for readability and interest.

A few matters of special interest ought to be brought to the reader's attention. Every translator of the Bible must concern himself about the text that he will use as the basis for his translation. Recent papyri discoveries and intensive textual study during the present century have shed new light on the text of the Greek New Testament. ACT translators utilize this data in determining at each point the most accurate Greek text from which to work.

Once the text has been decided, the translator faces the demanding task of rendering the ideas expressed by an ancient language into a clear and accurate modern idiom. To attempt a word-by-word rendition at every point is increasingly recognized to be an inadequate method of translation and based on a mistaken concept of human language. In order to be accurate, without being stilted, translation must be free sometimes to go sentence by sentence, or clause by clause, not merely word by word. ACT benefits from the freedom afforded by the translation of larger sense units and so is able to translate the Word of God more accurately.

The reader will miss the archaic Elizabethan pronouns used in address to God. This will, no doubt, evoke a varied reaction. Yet the decision to dispense with them in this version could hardly have been otherwise. In the original languages of the Bible no distinction is made between pronouns used in address to God and those used in address to mortals. Moreover, the language of the Bible was for the most part the language of the common man. It really does the Bible less than justice not to render it in the language of the people. But "thee" and "thou," with their strange-sounding verbs such as "hadst" and "lovedst," are wholly foreign to the present generation. Those who all their lifetime have read the Bible in a time-honored translation may experience some difficulty adjusting to a thoroughly contemporary version. However, those who are familiar with the Bible will recognize their responsibility to present it in a form that is readily understandable to all.

The translators have attempted to employ language that has a relatively enduring quality. Mere colloquialisms and provincialisms have been rejected. Clarity and propriety have been the watchwords. The goal has been a version equally suitable for public worship and private reading, for evangelism, and for study.

Here and there uncertainty remains as to the correct wording of the original text, or the precise meaning that is to be expressed in English. In such places, footnotes call the reader's attention to the difficulties.

Section headings have been inserted. They are not a part of the official text of ACT, however, but have been added by the publisher for the purposes of this printing.

The Committee on Bible Translation, which is solely responsible for this translation, is grateful for

the active assistance of the New York Bible Society in producing the new translation.

The Gospel of John, to which the preface is attached, is a tentative translation embodying the principles and policies of ACT. Constructive criticism is welcomed and should be directed to the Committee on Bible Translation in care of the New York Bible Society, 5 East 48th Street, New York, New York, 10017.

Upon request the Committee will forward a list of those persons who are presently associated with the translation project.

#### Committee on Bible Translation

It is evident from this preface that the Committee on Bible Translation has set itself no little task. And in certain respects, in the opinion of this writer, the Committee has set itself an *impossible* task. But let me make a few specific comments on various matters mentioned in this preface.

1) One may agree, in theory, with the statement that "the Word of God should not remain shrouded in archaisms — however beautiful — which shut it off from living communication with those who know only the English of current conversation and literature." It is an altogether different question, however, whether in our King James Version the Word of God *is* — to any critical extent — shrouded in such archaisms. Personally, I do not believe that this is a serious problem in the KJV. I do not believe that the real problem is one of language-communication, either within or outside of the sphere of the covenant. Anyone who is seriously interested in finding out the Word of God can do so quite adequately through our King James Version. There is much ado today about "communicating" in a "relevant" way to the present generation. But it is frequently forgotten that this so-called problem of communicating is not basically a natural one, i.e., not one of mere language and intellectual understanding of language, but a spiritual one, i.e., one of a lack of spiritual apprehension and receptivity. No amount of "modernizing" of a translation of the Bible will solve that spiritual problem. There is but one power which can and will do this: the power of sovereign grace. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," I Cor. 2:14. Besides, what is meant — supposing that a new translation is necessary for a moment — by "those who know only the English of current conversation and literature?" Who are such people? Whose "English of current conversation," for example, is the standard? Is the English of the university student revolutionaries the standard? Is the English of the underground newspapers the standard? Is the English of the "effete intellectual snobs" the standard? If the Committee's criterion is applied — either as far as current conversation or current litera-

ture is concerned — must English which abounds in filth and profanity, in slang and four-letter words, be employed? And if this kind of language is not employed, will not the Word of God be shut off from living communication with those who know only such English? You see, it is not even an easy task to determine what is the English of "current conversation and literature." Besides that, how long — in our fast changing world — does such "current conversation and literature" remain *current*, and how fast does the English language change, and how frequently, therefore, must translations of the Bible be replaced? The same questions arise when the Committee speaks in this preface of a translation which "speaks the language of our day so naturally as to make the Word of God once more familiar." Is it indeed a question of language which is involved in the Bible being *familiar*? Is this the basic problem? And, what kind of language will that be? And: how long will such language *remain* familiar?

2) Then there are questions as to the translators engaged in this work. The preface is very vague and general on this point; but this is a crucial point. It certainly makes a great difference *who* is doing the translating. And yet this preface speaks vaguely of a "broad spectrum of Christianity." What is this? What is meant by Christianity, as well as by a broad spectrum thereof? Is such a "broad spectrum" equivalent to some kind of ecclesiastical and theological jumble? Besides, what is meant by a "sectarian bias?" Does the Committee indeed aim at an *unbiased* translation? But this is impossible, and everyone knows it is impossible. And what does the Committee understand by "sectarian?" Besides, what is meant by honoring the Bible "as the inspired Word of God?" I call your attention to the fact that there are many today who speak of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, but who nevertheless deny its infallibility. Do the translators all hold to infallibility? And if so, do they all understand the same thing by infallibility? Do they all hold to verbal inspiration? Do some allow for the possibility of error in Scripture, perhaps in so-called peripheral matters? And do the views of these translators on inspiration and infallibility govern their attitude toward the translation of Scripture? Thus, for example, what is the view of the translators on such a thing as *conjectural emendation*, something which we explained in our earlier editorial on the New English Bible? All of these matters are crucial.

3) Further, there is, to my mind, a very dangerous trend toward extremely free translation expressed in this preface. Anyone who is acquainted with the original languages in which Scripture was written will recognize, of course, that the business of accurately transferring what is written in Hebrew or Greek to the English language is fraught with great difficulty, and that it is not at all easy to draw a line between a stilted, but

accurate and a free, but loose translation. There are many nuances of one language which are extremely difficult to express in another language. But when the Committee states that translation "must be free sometimes to go sentence by sentence, or clause by clause, not merely word by word," and when it goes on to state that "ACT benefits from the freedom afforded by the translation of larger sense units and so is able to translate the Word of God more accurately," this writer begins to fear and tremble; and he would certainly want a long, long time to go through such a translation with a fine-toothed comb before he would accept it as a substitute for the well-tested KJV, to say the very least.

There are other matters which need our attention in this connection. There is the entire matter — basic to all translation work — of textual criticism, its princi-

ples, methods, and value. Then there is the question whether the sample already produced (the Gospel according to John) has actually measured up to the Committee's goal as far as language is concerned. And, above all, there is the question whether this translation is *faithful* to the original. To these questions we shall give our attention next time.

Meanwhile, another correspondent has sent me a little tract which defends the King James Version on the basis that the Textus Receptus is the only valid version of the original. I understand that this tract has been rather widely distributed and has in some circles — mistakenly, I think — met with a good reception. I can appreciate a defense of the King James Version and its continued use; but I cannot go along with what I understand to be the position of this tract. And I will try to explain my reasons in a later editorial.

## *In His Fear*

# Coming Down: A Section of the Wall

*Rev. John A. Heys*

In his epistle to the Ephesians Paul points out that by His cross and Spirit Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles.

On the one side of the wall — in the same building — were the fleshly seed of Abraham. On the other side were the rest of the human race. That means not simply that Ham and Japheth's children were on one side of the wall, and Shem's were on the other side. It means that from the call of Abraham — with few exceptions — all of Shem's descendants, who were not Abraham's fleshly seed, likewise were on the side of Ham's and Japheth's children. And the point that Paul makes here is that no such barrier exists anymore in that building.

Ever since the day of Pentecost also descendants of Ham and of Japheth, and of those generations of Shem which are not the fleshly seed of Abraham, are found to be members of the church of Christ. Yet we sometimes think either that God has a more difficult time in making those of Ham's children members of that body of Christ, because they have a different temperament and nature, or that He is more reluctant to do so. Because the white race has played such a large part in the development of the church and of the truth, we seem so often to think that the black race scarcely belongs there. And without any proof we claim that the color of these is part of the curse that was pronounced not upon Ham but upon the Canaanites.

A similar way of thinking is sometimes found among us when we find it hard to believe that any but certain nations, and people from certain nations, can really be Reformed. To find those who love the Reformed faith and subscribe to it among the black race is not only a surprise but considered to be quite an exception to the rule. It just does not seem to be the expected. To some it may not even seem right or sincere.

Yet our churches have been and are witnessing such a section of the wall coming down in our mission field in Jamaica where we deal exclusively with those of Ham's descendants, and are black as far as the color of their skin is concerned, but spiritually have been made to be whiter than snow by the grace and Spirit of Him Who, through His Son, gathers from the beginning to the end of the world, and out of the whole human race, one church to the praise of the glory of His grace. And we wish in this and the next installment to quote from the report which we gave to our Mission Committee upon the labours performed in this mission field from January 27 through April 22 of this year, to show this.

Interest among our people in this field definitely is growing, and they are entitled to know what is being done there, what fruit is to be found, and even something of the method used. The report is dated April 29, 1970 and follows with some editing and a few words of amplification and explanation.

"Esteemed Fellow Committee Members,

"Since the twelve weeks of my labour in our Jamaican mission field in Jamaica dovetailed with those of Rev. Lubbers, I can be brief in my analysis of the spiritual condition of the churches and evaluation of the field by stating that with minor differences I concur with Rev. Lubbers in his points III. and IV. of his report.

"As a general characterization of the preaching I was privileged to perform on the island, let it be stated that my first sermon, delivered February 1 at Belmont was on the text of Matthew 5:13, "Ye are the salt of the earth." (Incidentally I preached the same sermon that afternoon on the lawn of the Baptist church at Friendship Hill with Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers and Mr. and Mrs. Meulenberg in the audience. Rev. Lubbers preached that morning at Cave Mt.; and in the evening he preached his "farewell" sermon at Lucea in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Meulenberg, my wife and I.) From that first sermon onward I sought to build up the brethren and sisters in the truth of what we are and have in our Saviour Jesus Christ, choosing also such texts as John 3:16 and Revelation 3:20 to point out to them the distinctive truth of the Reformed Faith. Then on April 19 I preached a 'farewell' sermon in the morning at Rev. Ruddock's church at Fort William, and in the evening at Rev. Frame's church at Lucea on II Peter 3:17, emphasizing the words of Peter: "Beware lest ye fall from your own steadfastness." (I had preached a 'farewell' sermon for one of Rev. Elliott's congregations at Cave Mt. the Thursday evening before — and he was not able to attend because he suffered a broken bone in his shoulder and some broken ribs in a fall — on Philippians 1:6, where Paul expresses his confidence that God would perform till the day of Christ the good work which He has begun.)

"Sermons were preached in all sixteen churches except Santa Cruz, where a blackboard instruction session was held. Both the distance and the difficulty of which Rev. Lubbers spoke in his report prevented a service there. (Incidentally this difficulty has now been removed.) I preached also (as already pointed out) on the lawn of the Baptist Church at Friendship Hill for the members of the Fort William and Mt. Lebanon congregations, together with a few of the former Friendship Hill members. The Fort William church is chiefly the remnant of the Friendship Hill church which formerly was served by Rev. Frame and later by Rev. Ruddock, until Elder Smith, on whose property the church building stands, took the greater share of the congregation away. I also preached on the street in front of a 'shop' (we would call it a store) at Hammersmith, where a member of Rev. Elliott's congregation at Islington now resides. I preached two or more times in thirteen of these churches, preaching five times in Cambridge, where I had the unique experience of preaching two Good Friday sermons, one at 10 o'clock in the morning, and the other at 7 o'clock

in the evening. Including the blackboard instruction sessions, I appeared before the congregations of Rev. Elliott 24 times, before those of Rev. Frame 16 times, and before those of Rev. Ruddock 15 times.

"The blackboard instruction sessions, introduced by Rev. Lubbers, I have found to be the most beneficial method of teaching these brethren and sisters the truth of the Reformed Faith that we have ever used there. And their testimony underscores this fact. The ministers often asked their congregations after the sessions, 'Doesn't this help you to see the truth more clearly than the preaching does?' And the answer is always an emphatic Yes. One elder, presiding in the absence of the minister said to the congregation, 'When Rev. Heys preaches, you see the truth of one text. When he teaches with the blackboard, you see the truth of the whole Bible.' This may be somewhat crudely stated, but the meaning will be clear, if I explain to you somewhat the character of these instruction sessions.

"My plans before leaving home, as far as these blackboard instruction sessions are concerned, were to treat something quite different from what I actually presented, and in fact from what I had already begun to treat. The Lord leads, and we wisely follow the directing of His Spirit. In one of the very first sessions of school for the ministers at the home, I resorted to use of the blackboard and drew a few pictures to illustrate the point. At once, and almost in unison, they pleaded with me to do this in the congregations. And so began a series of sessions of illustrating the Five Points of Calvinism on the blackboard with pictures, charts, diagrams and graphs. Before we left for home I prepared a notebook for each of the ministers, and for student Kenneth Brown, in which I traced step by step, and page after page, the illustrations I used to make these truths live before their eyes. Two of the ministers had requested this and said that they would like to study them and try their hand at it before their people, if we would let them use our blackboard.

"The method I used contained three distinct elements. I always prepared the setting by writing the word GOD in capital letters at the top of the blackboard. And after one or two sessions I had at once the answer to my initial question, 'Where do we begin, when we want to understand the truth?' They know in these congregations that to end in the truth of God we must begin with God. After these preliminary steps I tried to explain the meaning of the terms as simply as I could, and where I could in their own language. Having done this I began to draw a picture or chart, using both sides of the blackboard, and sometimes different colored chalk to mark off the lie from the truth. Then came the third element — which in part had been resorted to during the drawing of the picture, diagram or chart — namely the giving of a series of texts from both the Old and the New Testaments for

them to look up to see that this is indeed what GOD says. This they enjoyed tremendously; and I deem it extremely important. You would have thrilled to watch them racing through their Bibles in the dim light of a kerosene lantern to find the place first, and to be the one who could stand and read the verse and pick out the word or phrase that proved the point under discussion. You would also have enjoyed seeing the heads nod in agreement that this is what GOD says when the verse was read. The value of this element is that they worked *themselves* into the truth. They themselves found what Scripture teaches and what they did not know before. That is what Elder Spence meant when he said that in these sessions they saw the truth of the whole Bible. They found Scripture teaching them something that they did not know before, and so often something the very opposite of what they had been taught in days gone by and before we came to labour among them. An hour was far too short for them, and we had repeatedly to tell them that it is not good to eat two meals at one sitting. We highly recom-

mend this method of instruction in this field.

"These blackboard instruction sessions were held in eleven of the churches. I was able to treat all Five Points of Calvinism in four of these eleven churches: In Lucea and the Reading church at West Lacovia, which are Rev. Frame's churches; Belmont, which is Rev. Elliott's church; and Latium, which is Rev. Rud-dock's church. This included in most of these a sixth lesson which served as a summarization of the matter and showed election to be the heart of the church, showed that total depravity demanded that this election be unconditional, showed that election demanded that the atonement be limited and sends forth an irresistible grace, as well as assures us of a perseverance of the saints. One or more of these sessions were held in Mahoe, Santa Cruz, Hope Hill, Cave Mt., Fort William, Mt. Lebanon and Cambridge."

In our next installment in this rubric we will continue the report and show some of the fruit of the labour.

## *From Holy Writ*

# Explanation of Ezekiel 18: 1-32 (continued)

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

### *THE LORD'S JUST WAYS IN THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL (Ezekiel 18:25-30)*

It is one thing to sin against the Lord and transgress His commandments; it is quite another when the Lord must hear the contradiction of sinners! Israel is here represented by the Lord as contending with the Lord's ways and judgments with them. In the "proverb" of the sour grapes is an accusation against the Lord that he is not doing justice and equity in Israel. The balances of God's justice are not equal. God does not deal with them according to His ordinances in Israel!

For let it not be misunderstood!

The Lord is here not speaking to mankind in general and of his dealings with those who left to walk in their own ways. (Acts 14:16) On the contrary, the Lord, Jehovah God, is here addressing the house of Israel in whose midst He had planted and established His NAME! He is addressing the theocratic nation of Israel to whom the oracles of God had been entrusted. These have the prophetic Word of the law and the prophets as this shines more and more unto the perfect day. All these words speak of the coming of the Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes. When these Scriptures are understood we see that the Christ must die and thus enter into His glory!

Hence, this controversy, which God has with His

people, must not be lifted out of this covenantal context and placed erroneously in the setting of "mankind in general." The "wicked" here addressed are the sinners in Israel and not sinners in general, whom God has left to walk in their own ways. These latter perish "without law." (Rom. 2:12) Rather here are the "godless" who are sons of Abraham for whom Christ died at His own time when they were yet sinners! (Romans 5:7,8) For do not forget that God shows us in the case of Abraham's justification by faith that He justifies the "godless." Justifier of the godless is He! All is pure grace of elective love, to the praise of the glory of His grace!

Some forty odd years ago the Synod of 1924 of the Christian Reformed Church, held at Kalamazoo, Michigan, struggled to include the *reprobate* wicked as the addressees here in the text. The proposition which I here quote was not adopted by the Synod. However it was attempted in two different versions.

Version No. 1. It reads as follows:

... according to Scripture and the Confessions it is established that God is favorably inclined and gives grace to those whom Scriptures designates as ungodly and unrighteous, which, of course, includes the reprobates.

Version No. 2. It reads as follows:

Synod declares that according to Scripture and the Confes-

sions it is established, not only that God is filled with wrath against the reprobates because of their sin, but that he is also favorably inclined and bestows blessings upon those whom Scripture calls ungodly and unrighteous, which, of course, includes the reprobates. (\*)

Now the reader must understand that this was not adopted by the Synod, that is to say, it was not adopted in this blunt and outspoken form. A more subtle and camouflaged form of it was later given, in stating that God's love is toward "His creatures in general." And this is "evident" from the "general offer of the Gospel."

Perhaps we do the reader a service by casting the blunt version in a syllogistic form. It goes as follows:

1. God gives grace to the ungodly and unrighteous.
2. The Reprobate are ungodly and unrighteous.
3. Ergo: God gives grace to the Reprobate wicked.

It is here assumed that in such a passage as here in Ezekiel 18:23 the "wicked" are all the wicked, both reprobate and elect. God shows both of them grace in the preaching of the Word.

However, the text speaks here to wicked ones in the house of Israel. And the text calls *all* to repentance, and life is promised to the repentant ones, and to none else! Here is a general preaching of repentance, based on reasons taken out of the virtue of God's justice and holiness, with a particular promise for those who truly repent and turn unto the Lord.

And these are His equal ways in the house of Israel! They are the command to repentance, serious command to repentance, with an equally serious promise of life to those who repent, and death for those who repent not!

#### *THE IMPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT: HOUSE OF ISRAEL.* (Ezekiel 18:6, 15, 25, 29, etc.)

It is important in this connection to understand well the meaning of the name "Israel." This is the name which the Lord gives to Jacob at the occasion of His wrestling with Jacob at the Jabbok river. An angel came and wrestled with Jacob all the night. Jacob too, wrestled with tears and strong crying. Yea, Jacob had power over the angel and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him. The Lord found Jacob in Bethel . . . even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial. And, as a name which spells the victory for the penitent sinner, Jacob is called "Israel." He is a prince of God, who has conducted himself in a princely and courageous manner. He would not let the LORD go unless the God of Israel blessed him.

Such is the indication of true repentance and conversion. One wrestles with the Lord and overcomes because the Lord's ways are equal and just!

Now it is very fitting in this connection to call the people by the name house of Israel!

It reminds them of their origin and high estate.

(\*) See *The Protestant Reformed Churches In America* by Rev. Herman Hoeksema, pages 77-83.

Blessed art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee? Thou art a people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places. (Cf. Deut. 33:29)

Yes, this is the people of sovereign election. Paul sets this all in focus in Romans 9:1-5. For Israel, through the entire Old Testament dispensation, never ceased to be a royal people, a holy nation, a peculiar possession of the Lord. (Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9) Even in the very time when Ezekiel writes to the house of Israel in Babylon the people of God did not cease to be a peculiar nation. They remained intact. The Lord was to them a shield and protection. The nation went down into Babylon and returned after seventy years! And that is the import of their being designated: house of Israel!

What is the secret of this unique character of the house of Israel? This Paul indicates when he says that his kinsmen for whom he has great sorrow continually, are such that *they are Israelites!* Israel is the adopted firstborn son of God. They are a theocratic nation who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Did God ever reveal His glory of the Shekinah to any other people in a pillar of cloud from heaven? They are a people to whom pertained the testamental words of God that in them all the nations should be blessed in the Seed to come. It was at Sinai that the LORD says to his redeemed people: here is my law and ordinances, walk in them in thankfulness. Israel may alone gather in the temple to serve the Lord under the Levitical order of Aaron, and all the promises which God will surely fulfil are for Israel. Israel alone can look back to the fathers, the patriarchs and claim God as their God of the burning bush, the I AM THAT I AM! And out of this Israel will Emanuel be born, the Christ according to the flesh, yet, God blessed over all, Amen!

But there were many who did not believe and repent!

These complained that the Lord's ways were not equal and used the evil proverb concerning the land of Israel!

Does that not give the lie to the Lord's calling this people the house of Israel?

Not at all! The solution to this seemingly insurmountable difficulty is that there is a twofold Israel. There is the Israel of God, the true Israel after the promise, and the fleshly Israel. Both are in Babylon in one nation. However, both are not brought to repentance by the word of the Lord. The elect obtained mercy and the rest were hardened! (Romans 11:7b) But the Israel of God, the true house of Israel is saved in the way of repentance. For Christ has gone on high that he might give repentance to Israel.

#### *THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL SAVED* (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

Yes, everyone is judged according to his ways. When

the LORD saves the true Israel they, too, are judged according to their ways of repentance. And the fleshly Israel is condemned according to their unrepentance. The latter, too, have been seriously called to repentance in the outward calling. They have heard what the Lord said concerning the connection of repentance and life, but due to their unbelief it only made their hearts fat for the slaughter. They did not repent so that the LORD healed them. They did not cast their transgression, all their transgressions from them in heartfelt sorrow for sin!

A new spirit and heart they did not make to themselves. They did not turn from their iniquities and turn unto the Lord. Standing in the midst of the very house of God they did not know the LORD of the house, nor did they acknowledge Him to be their LORD! They perish in their sins. They perish in their *own personal sins* and not in the sins of their fathers!

But the true house of Israel repents and lives.

Yes, this is given them from heaven. Here are the ways of God which are past tracing out and they are

beyond our searching them out! This is higher than heaven and deeper than hell! God is incomprehensible. But these ways which we cannot search out are just ways in our deepest heart and conscience and these ways afford no difficulty on this score. And they are true ways. God is faithful and just to forgive the sins of any who confess them, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin!

And every repentant sinner experiences that God has no pleasure in the death of the one dying! He experiences that the repentant lives! But conversely that fleshly Israelite experiences, too, that God has no pleasure simply in his death, but that He has pleasure in maintaining the just balances: the unrepentant shall die! And God has pleasure in His own holiness in the midst of His people: to the one a savor of life unto life, and to the other a savor of death unto death. Thus even the Lord triumphs in grace and wrath.

No more is the proverb heard in heaven or hell: "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge!"

## *Contending for the Faith*

# **The Doctrine of Atonement**

FIRST PERIOD — 80-254 A.D.

*Rev. H. Veldman*

Justin Martyr was a Gentile, but born in Samaria, near Jacob's well. The date of his birth is uncertain, but may be fixed about A.D. 114. His father and grandfather were probably of Roman origin. Before his conversion to Christianity he studied in the schools of the philosophers, searching after some knowledge which would satisfy the cravings of his soul. At last he became acquainted with Christianity, being at once impressed with the extraordinary fearlessness which the Christians displayed in the presence of death, and with the grandeur, stability, and truth of the teachings of the Old Testament. From this time he acted as an evangelist, taking every opportunity to proclaim the gospel as the only safe and certain philosophy, the only way to salvation. It is probable that he traveled much. We know that he was some time in Ephesus, and he must have lived for a considerable period in Rome. While in Rome, the philosophers, especially the Cynics, plotted against him, and he sealed his testimony to the truth by martyrdom. The writings of this author are among the most important, it is said, to have come down to us from the second century.

Martyr offers his explanation of the significance of the "blood of the grape" in Gen. 49:11, and he writes:

And that expression which was committed to writing by Moses, and prophesied by the patriarch Jacob, namely, "He shall wash His garments with wine, and His vesture with the blood of the grape," signified that He would wash those that believe in Him with His own blood. For the Holy Spirit called those who receive remission of sins through Him, His garments; amongst whom He is always present in power, but will be manifestly present at His second coming. That the Scripture mentions the blood of the grape has been evidently designed, because Christ derives blood not from the seed of man, but from the power of God. For as God, and not man, has produced the blood of the vine, so also (the Scripture) has predicted that the blood of Christ would be not of the seed of man, but of the power of God. But this prophecy, sirs, which I repeated, proves that Christ is not man of men, begotten in the ordinary course of humanity.

In his dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, Justin Martyr refers again and again to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In one of these writings to Trypho he offers us a brief and running explanation of Is. 53, that Isaiah teaches that sins are forgiven through the blood of Christ. He introduces this explanation as follows:

For Isaiah did not send you to a bath, there to wash away murder and other sins, which not even all the water of the sea were sufficient to purge; but, as might have been expected, this was that saving bath of the olden time which followed those who repented, and who no longer were purified by the blood of goats and of sheep, or by the ashes of an heifer, or by the offerings of fine flour, but by faith through the blood of Christ, and through His death, Who died for this very reason, as Isaiah himself said, when he spake thus: "The Lord shall make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the nations and the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God."

Elsewhere in his dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr refers to the curse which Christ endured upon the cross. Referring to the brazen serpent of Moses in the wilderness, he writes:

For tell me, was it not God Who commanded by Moses that no image or likeness of anything which was in heaven above or which was on the earth should be made, and yet who caused the brazen serpent to be made by Moses in the wilderness, and set it up for a sign by which those bitten by serpents were saved? Yet is He free from unrighteousness. For by this, as I previously remarked, He proclaimed the mystery, by which He declared that He would break the power of the serpent which occasioned the transgression of Adam, and would bring to them that believe on Him Who was foreshadowed by this sign, i.e., Him Who was to be crucified, salvation from the fangs of the serpent, which are wicked deeds, idolatries, and other unrighteous acts. Unless the matter be so understood, give me a reason why Moses set up the brazen serpent for a sign, and bade those that were bitten gaze at it, and the wounded were healed; and this, too, when he had himself commanded that no likeness of anything whatsoever should be made.

Hereupon Martyr continues his discourse upon the curse of the cross. He does not specify sharply whether Christ died for all men or only for His own, although one could conclude from his writings that he views the death of Christ as having occurred for all mankind, head for head. He writes:

For the whole human race will be found to be under a curse. For it is written in the law of Moses, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And no one has accurately done all, nor will you venture to deny this; but some more and some less than others have observed the ordinances enjoined. But if those who are under this law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all the requirements, how much more shall all the nations appear to be under a curse who practise idolatry, who seduce youths, and commit other crimes? If, then, the Father of all wished His Christ for the whole human family to take upon Him the curses of all, knowing that, after He had been crucified and was dead, He would raise Him up, why do you argue about Him, who submitted to suffer these things according to the

Father's will, as if He were accursed, and do not rather bewail yourselves? For although His Father caused Him to suffer these things in behalf of the human family, yet you did not commit the deed as in obedience to the will of God.

Justin Martyr then proceeds to correct Trypho when the latter contends that, if the Father wished the Christ to suffer all these things, then the Jews are blameless when they caused the prophets of the old dispensation to suffer and when they nailed Christ to the cross. Indeed, should the Jews repent, then remission of sins would also be theirs. We must bear in mind that Justin Martyr is writing this to a Jew who does not believe in the Christ of the cross. It is also possible that when this author writes of the death of Christ as occurring for all mankind and for the whole human family, he may mean this in the sense that Christ suffered and died for all in the sense that he died for all classes of men. The Scriptures use the word "all" often in this sense. Martyr, however, does not teach that Christ took upon Himself the curse that was due to us.

Irenaeus does indeed speak of reconciliation through satisfaction but it is not quite clear just what this church father meant even by this phrase. Little is known of the personal history of Irenaeus. In his early youth he was acquainted with Polycarp, the illustrious bishop of Smyrna. It is generally believed that he was born somewhere between A.D. 120 and A.D. 140, and that he closed his life, as a true shepherd, with thousands of his flock, in the massacre, A.D. 202, stimulated by the wolfish emperor Severus.

Concerning the view of Irenaeus in redemption, Philip Schaff writes in Volume II of his *History of the Christian Church*, page 587, the following:

Irenaeus is the first of all the church fathers to give a careful analysis of the work of redemption, and his view is by far the deepest and soundest we find in the first three centuries. Christ, he teaches, as the second Adam, repeated in himself the entire life of man, from childhood to manhood, from birth to death and hades, and as it were summed up that life and brought it under one head, with the double purpose of restoring humanity from its fall and carrying it to perfection. Redemption comprises the taking away of sin by the perfect obedience of Christ; the destruction of death by victory over the devil; and the communication of a new divine life to man. To accomplish this work, the Redeemer must unite in himself the divine and human natures; for only as God could he do what man could not, and only as man could he do in a legitimate way, what man should. By the voluntary disobedience of Adam the devil gained a power over man, but in an unfair way, by fraud. By the voluntary obedience of Christ that power was wrested from him by lawful means. This took place first in the temptation, in which Christ renewed or recapitulated the struggle of Adam with Satan, but defeated the seducer, and thereby liber-

ated man from his thralldom. But then the whole life of Christ was a continuous victorious conflict with Satan, and a constant obedience to God. This obedience completed itself in the suffering and death on the tree of the cross, and thus blotted out the disobedience which the first Adam had committed on the tree of knowledge. This, however, is only the negative side. To this is added, as already remarked, the communication of a new divine principle of life, and the perfecting of the idea of humanity first effected by Christ.

Reinhold Seeberg, in his *The History of Doctrines*, Book I, page 129, offers us his conclusions from the writings of Irenaeus:

By His blood Christ redeemed us from the unrighteous dominion of sin (unrighteous dominion of sin, which may well be questioned —H.V.), by His blood effectually redeeming us, He gave Himself a ransom for those who have been led into captivity . . . . Through this fellowship of Christ with the race, it becomes reconciled to God; “for in the first Adam we offended, not observing his commandment; in the second Adam we have been reconciled again, having become obedient unto death” . . . . Through the fall, the race was brought under the dominion, though unlawful, of the devil. Christ has lawfully as a man,

by the application and observance of the divine commandment (at His temptation), conquered the devil, and He has by His resurrection broken the power of death over the race. Thus the race became free from the power of death and the devil and from condemnation . . . . And thus man became again precious in God’s sight, and intercourse and fellowship between God and man was restored through the forgiveness of sins . . . . As fellowship with the first Adam brought death to us, so fellowship with the second Adam brings life and perfection. Irenaeus accordingly means that Christ taught us to know God, and that He, by entering the race and becoming a member of the body of humanity, has, as the new Adam, made the latter acceptable to God and freed it from the devil, death, and the dominion of sin.

Seeberg, therefore, surely confirms the observation of Philip Schaff, namely, that Irenaeus gives us a careful analysis of the work of redemption, and his view is by far the deepest and soundest that can be found in the first three centuries. According to Irenaeus, redemption comprises the taking away of sin by the perfect obedience of Christ, the destruction of death by victory over the devil and the communication of a new divine life to man.

## *Come Ye Apart... And Rest A While*

Rev. C. Hanko

Do you read your Bible? Likely you wonder whether I am addressing this question to you. Maybe you even wonder why this question should be put to any reader of the *Standard Bearer*. Is it not a presupposition that any one who reads this paper also reads his Bible? Yet now that you are confronted personally with this question do not brush it aside; still more, do not be too ready to answer in the affirmative. Even though without exception we all read the Bible in our family devotions, in the church on Sunday, and in our society meetings or catechism classes, the question is very pertinent to each of us: Do I actually read my Bible?

What this question implies is this: Do I hear God speak to me from His Word, so that I am instructed, admonished, comforted, strengthened by that Word of God from day to day? Is it actually for me a lamp before my feet, always directing me in all that I do, in all that I say, in all that I think, and in all that I desire? Do I seek its guidance, so that I dare not venture out without asking for direction from that Word? Still more, when I am reading that Word do I experience the bond of fellowship that unites me to God in Christ, even as I do when I read a letter from a member of my family or from a dear friend? Is the Bible God’s voice

speaking to me?

I am assuming that we have not been swept along with the tide of modern criticism that denies verbal inspiration and the infallible Bible. We believe in the inspired Word of God, as Paul wrote to Timothy: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, . . . .” Pausing there a moment, the comment should be made that Paul speaks of ALL Scripture, as one complete whole and including every part to the tittle and the iota. I also like the idea of “God-breathed” as the word for “inspired of God” means. And then to go on: “and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (If you underscore passages in your Bible, this is a good one to underscore.) “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” As I said, we believe that, yet when have you (and I include myself) last gone to Scripture to listen to God’s instruction in doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness?

We also believe the word of the apostle Peter in II Peter 1:19, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” Picture

yourself with flashlight in hand, the flashlight of Scripture, searching out all the dark nooks and hidden crannies of this present evil world. Let the flashlight shine on all the happenings of our day, wars, rumors of wars, riots, demonstrations, revolts against authorities with their accompanying bloodshed, brazen wickedness, defiance of all decency, apostasy in the church, and so much more. Yes, turn the flashlight about and let it shine in your own mind, revealing the darkness and sins that still lurk there, and then let it shine on your daily walk and conversation in the midst of your family and in the world. Let that light be absorbed by the new man in Christ, so that the glow remains even after the light has been turned away, that is, experience that the day-star arises within your heart ever leading you onward toward the perfect day, as the Spirit says through Peter.

Turn now to Nehemiah 8:8. There we read of Ezra with the help of others reading the law to the returned captives from Babylon, who are now in and about Jerusalem. Men and women and all those who could understand had come together, "and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." Verse 4. "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Practically every word should be underscored in that last verse. They read *distinctly*. They *gave the sense*. They caused them to *understand the reading*. Now is not that the only way to read the Scriptures?

No matter how young or how old we are, there are some important pointers here to teach us to read the Bible.

First, we should set aside a definite time, preferably the same time every day. Now we should not raise the objection that we are too busy. Was it Luther that said that he was so busy that he was compelled to spend more time than usual reading his Bible? Besides, what does it profit a man if he succeeds in gaining the whole world at the expense of his soul?

Second, we should be alone in a quiet atmosphere, where we can be apart to rest a while in quiet meditation and prayer with God.

Third, we should begin with a prayer, not only to put us in a proper attitude of heart and mind, but also to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who alone is able to lead us into all truth.

Fourth, we should pick out a portion of Scripture that appeals to us. This may be a Psalm or some other familiar passage of Scripture, or some passage that you are studying in church or in society. It does not matter how familiar that passage may be; sometimes, at least at the outset, the more familiar it is the better. Some years ago I was preaching a series of sermons on the epistle to the Ephesians. One member of the congregation spent some time every Sunday afternoon to read the entire epistle, seeking to grasp the central thought

and main message of the entire epistle. By the time I had finished the series she had committed most of it to memory, and she assured me that her private devotions had been of great benefit to her.

Fifth, there are times when it is advisable to read only a small portion, maybe just a few verses. In that case, it is well to pause at the end of each verse and ask ourselves, what is the main thought of this verse? How is this verse related to those that precede and follow it. There was an elder in one of our western churches, — this was many years ago when education was at a minimum, — who listened eagerly for the minister to read his text on Sunday. Preferably he would like to know in advance what the sermon was to be about. As soon as the text was announced, and while the elder was listening with one ear to the introduction of the sermon, he was formulating in his own mind the theme for that text. He was eager to know whether his theme would compare to that of the minister's. And I must admit, he was not bad. I wonder how many of our listeners on Sunday concentrate their attention on the theme and division of the sermon, in order to learn to analyze a text by themselves as well as to follow the trend of the sermon?

Sixth, a Bible with marginal references is a big help. It is always a good rule to let Scripture speak for itself by comparing Scripture with Scripture. It is also good to have a good concordance to look up various references where the same word is used. Learning to use a concordance adds much pleasure to the study of God's Word.

Last, but by no means least, learn to listen. One thing we must do, and this is, that we learn to listen to what the Spirit saith to the churches and to us. When we entered the seminary the late Prof. H. Hoeksema immediately stressed that we could never become preachers unless we learned to listen. He stressed, read your text, read the context, read it again and again, even before consulting any commentary. And while you read *listen*. Let the text speak to you. If it does not speak to you it will never speak to the congregation on Sunday. I also recall that one student very seriously made the remark, "Domine, I listen and listen, but I hear nothing." With a reassuring smile the professor answered, "That's all right, just keep on listening." We must prayerfully ask: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."



## *All Around Us*

# Report of the Synod of 1970

*Prof. H. Hanko*

The broadest ecclesiastical assembly of our Churches finished its work late Wednesday afternoon, June 10. If measured according to the standards which men apply to ecclesiastical assemblies, it was, presumably, not a very important meeting. There were no press reporters at the meeting and no articles were to be found in the daily paper concerning Synod's activities. There was no flood of press releases containing statements of Synod's position concerning the affairs of the nation. There were no decisions which touch upon the various social, political and economic problems of the day and which give advice to our nation's leaders concerning the war in Viet Nam, the racial strife in the country, the problems of poverty, ghetto life, etc. The Synod met, for the most part, unnoticed.

But this does not mean that the Synod was unimportant. God's standards of measurement are different from the standards used by men. It was the Word of God which came to Zechariah many years ago: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" This Word is still applicable today. If the Synod met with God's approval, all is well — regardless of men's opinions.

### General Impressions

This report of Synod is not intended to be an official report documenting official decisions and giving an authorized survey of all Synod's business. It is for this reason that our readers are strongly urged to obtain a copy of the printed *Acts* when they become available later this summer. Rather, this report, unofficial in nature, is intended to give our people a general idea of the business which was conducted and the impressions of the undersigned of the Synod of 1970.

When looking back on the Synod several impressions stand out clearly. There was first of all the fact that the Synodical prayer service, with which this Synod was begun, was far better attended than the prayer services usually are. Rev. C. Hanko preached a beautiful and inspirational sermon on the last three vss. of Ephesians 2. The sermon will be recorded in full in the *Acts*. Our people are urged to read it. If the size of the crowd at the prayer service is indicative of anything, it is indicative of the fact that our people are interested in Synod's work and interested in the well-being of the denomination. It is easy to sit back and criticize Synod after her meetings are over. It is easier yet to be indifferent to what Synod does. But criticism and indifference which arise from those who do not pray for Synod and who do not bring the needs of Synod before the throne of God's grace are difficult to under-

stand. That so many joined in prayer with the delegates was heartening indeed.

The second impression left on this reporter by Synod was the active participation of all of Synod's delegates. There were present at Synod especially elder delegates who were at Synod for the first time. These men took an active part not only in the deliberations and discussions, but they also contributed to the Synod by their discussions and helped Synod reach decisions on difficult and knotty problems. What was true of those delegates who were present for the first time was true of all the delegates. All took an active part in the abundance of work that had to be done. This made the Synod a rich and pleasant Synod to attend.

The third impression that was left with this reporter is the excellent work done by the committees of pre-advice. The committees did their work well and served Synod with good advice. The advantages of this are plain. When good advice is brought to Synod, Synod's work is expedited and Synod is saved a great deal of time. It is usually the case that when these committees do not do good work that Synod is caught in endless wrangling and debate over minor issues. For the most part the work of the committees was good.

Finally, the general impression was strong in this reporter that Synod labored with dedication and zeal for the cause of God and for the cause of our churches. Synod was a time during which our ministers and elders could meet each other and enjoy the fellowship which such a meeting provides. Unity and love prevailed. Consecration for the cause of God was evident.

For all these reasons, it was a good Synod to attend.

There were many specific items of importance to which Synod gave its attention. We offer our readers a brief survey of some of the most important.

### Mission Matters

A great deal of time was spent on matters of missions. And much of the work of Synod dealing with missions was specifically concerned with the work in Jamaica. In fact, so completely did the work in Jamaica dominate Synod's time in matters of missions that there was some discussion of the neglect of work in our own country. This discussion was not because Synod believed that the Jamaican work was unimportant; quite the contrary. But it is equally true that we have an important calling in this country as well which we must fulfill. This calling takes on increasing urgency as apostasy increases. Various organizations of our local

congregations, our Theological School and our Mission Committee have established contacts over a wide range with people who are concerned about developments within local Churches. Perhaps in the coming year it would be possible for one of our ministers to devote time to exploring these contacts and investigating various fields.

Specifically, some important decisions which relate to the Jamaican Field were taken. The action of renting a house for a missionary was approved as well as the purchase of a car. Definite plans were made for the length of work for a missionary, for the storage of the furniture and establishment of a place of residence during furloughs. Synod heard reports from Rev. J. Heys, Rev. G. C. Lubbers and Elder Meulenberg about the progress of the work.

By the time this is read, most of our people will know that Rev. Lubbers has accepted the call to labor as missionary in this island. This acceptance of Rev. Lubbers is the answer of our God to many prayers which have been raised to God both in our Churches and among the Churches in Jamaica. For this our people will be thankful. God has given us this field and we have worked there for almost ten years. But always we believed that work could be done there most successfully by a missionary who could labor full time among these people of God. This will now be done. To decide on this call was certainly not easy for Rev. Lubbers. There were many considerations and many problems, not the least of which is that the work there is very difficult. And certainly it will not be easy for our Southwest congregation to be without a shepherd. But we are very grateful. The Lord has given us this field — thrust it upon us. The Lord calls to these labors. The Lord has led Rev. Lubbers to assume, with God's help, the responsibility for them. We urge upon our people to remember Rev. Lubbers and his dear and faithful wife in their prayers to God. Plans are being made tentatively for Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers to depart about the first of September. Their address will be: c/o General Delivery, Montego Bay, Jamaica. The importance of letters cannot be overemphasized. We hope our people will write to our brother and sister often.

Other decisions were also made. The purchase of three sets of commentaries on the Heidelberg Catechism by Rev. H. Hoeksema was authorized for the Jamaica ministers. Synod also paid for 100 copies of the creeds to be used on the island. A ministers' traveling fund was established to assist in the payment of travelling expenses for the three ministers on Jamaica. This money is to be collected from our societies, Sunday Schools and by individual gifts. It is not budgeted in the Synodical assessments. A report was received concerning the money collected by Hudsonville's deacons for the poor in Jamaica. The report showed a balance of just over \$1,000.00 in this fund. Work is also being done to secure the property of the various

congregations in Jamaica so that the money collected for the repair and erection of buildings can be used. Synod authorized the taking of four collections by our churches for this building fund once again. Hopefully, with Rev. Lubbers permanently in the field, this work can be speeded up and the money collected sent and used to make the present buildings more suitable for worship.

There is also a fund established to help train young men on the island for the ministry. Synod heard reports that there is one man who is presently preparing for the ministry. And he needs help to complete his studies.

A couple of other matters pertaining to missions includes approval of help which was given to our Lynden congregation in connection with work being done in Indonesia and a report approved of by the Synod from the Foreign Mission Committee. This latter committee was instructed to report to the next Synod concerning the additional possibilities of broadening our foreign mission work. Radio work was also discussed. One station, in Yankton, South Dakota, was dropped and the Mission Committee was empowered to seek out new stations where our broadcast would serve the purpose of acquainting others with our place in the church world.

#### Theological School Matters

Reports were received on Synod concerning the work of the Theological School which showed that another year of study was completed in the School which was blessed by God. Five of the six students presently studying in the school have now been licensed to preach and will, the Lord willing, be serving our Western Churches this summer.

The School Committee presented information gained from various colleges with respect to recognition of pre-seminary courses taught in our school. That is, if some of our students who have taken pre-seminary courses in our school want to go on to earn their A. B. degree, there are colleges which, with a minimum of effort, will recognize the subjects taught in the Seminary.

Synod approved the payment of \$6,000.00 to First Church to redecorate the present Seminary facilities. This was partly in recognition of the many years of use without payment of rent which First Church has given the school.

The Synod was informed that according to previous Synodical approval a plot of ground was purchased for a future Seminary Building. This plot of ground is adjacent to Southeast Church. It is conceivable that our School will be able to have facilities of its own in the foreseeable future.

#### A Few Additional Matters

A few additional items of general interest are as follows. Synod took appreciative note of the fact that sev-

eral of our congregations have made considerable effort to reduce their subsidy requests or have gone off from subsidy altogether. The result of this is that the Synodical assessments have declined this year — a worthwhile trend in these days of inflation.

Matters came to Synod concerning the difficulties of our Oak Lawn congregation — difficulties which had been both in Classis East and Classis West. Synod spent more time and labor on these difficulties than on any other matter coming before her. A committee was appointed by the Synod to bring Synod's decisions to those directly involved in these difficulties and, if possible, to aid in a reconciliation of the troubles. May the prayers of our people arise before God that He may bring a solution to these difficult problems.

These are troubled times in which we are called to live. And there can be no doubt but that the Church is affected by the character of the times. This is true in more than one way. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the spirit of ungodliness in the world influences us all more than we sometimes like to admit. It is difficult and requires abundant grace for the Church to keep herself unspotted from the world and to preserve in herself the mind of Christ. On the other hand, the evils of the age impress upon us the urgency of our calling to work while it is day ere the night comes in which no man can labor.

May God bless the decisions of our last Synod and may our Churches continue faithful in their calling until the end.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*THE ROAD AHEAD: A Theology for the Church in Mission*, John H. Piet; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970; 103 pp., \$1.95 (paper).

That there is room in present day literature coming from the ecclesiastical press for a book on the theology of missions is almost a truism. Such a book could be important and would be welcome. But one qualification for such a book would have to be that it set forth the truths of Scripture on this subject. This book lacks this major characteristic. This is all the more sad since it was written by the Professor of Bible and Missions in Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

The main point of the book is set forth in the introduction and gives a clear indication of the direction the book will take.

The point we shall advance is that the chief concern of the church today is mission — the call to solve the tremendous problems of society, and the cry of man for authentic life.

Proceeding from this viewpoint, the author tackles, first of all, the problem of the definition of the church as given by the reformers of the sixteenth century. He finds this definition, contained in our creeds, totally inadequate because the problems of today are so completely different from the problems which the Reformers faced. He urges us to go behind the Reformers to Scripture itself to find a concept of the church which we can use. Apart from the fact that the author is somewhat inaccurate in his discussion of the history of the church in relation to the state prior to and after the Reformation, the author shows the common tendency of our day to turn away from the historic creeds of the church. This tendency arises from a view that the Scriptures themselves are subject to interpretations which vary according to the nature of the times in which the interpreter lives. This is very dangerous and

ultimately destructive of Scripture.

Proceeding then from this viewpoint, the author defines the true idea of the church in terms of mission. The strange part of the book is that while in it the author begs us to return to Scripture to learn from it concerning the church, he offers almost no Scriptural proof for his central thesis that the true nature of the church is that it is a church in mission.

Yet this view is developed throughout. In discussing the doctrine of election the author adopts the rather old idea of election that God's choice is not of individuals but is corporate, i.e., that God elected the nation of Israel in distinction from other nations so that Israel might serve other nations by her example and by her good influence upon these nations. This view of election is also carried through into the New Testament Church.

Following this same pattern, the author criticizes severely the distinction which has been made between the visible and the invisible Church. While it is not altogether clear what the author is saying at this point, he uses his criticism of the above distinction to make a further distinction between preaching and teaching. He insists that Scripture teaches that preaching is that work of the church done in the world which has as its purpose to persuade men to repent, while no preaching is done in the church. Here only teaching is performed. This distinction is to justify the thesis that the real work of the church is mission. Teaching is, after all, relatively unimportant in comparison with preaching.

The question of infant baptism vs. adult baptism is to be solved, in the author's opinion, not on Scriptural grounds, but on the basis of the answer to the question, What is the church? Because the church is for the service of the world, baptism "is a sign and seal for right living"; "a sign for mission." All this is based on

some extremely shoddy exegesis of Romans 4-6.

The same is true of the Lord's Supper. It is to "focus the attention of the Church upon God and His mission." Hence the question of the presence of Christ (so important at the time of the Reformation) is irrelevant and extra-Scriptural. The Lord's Supper is participation with Christ in His redemptive work in the world.

Cutting himself loose from the firm moorings of the confessions of the church, the author has constructed a theology for mission which is in no sense Scriptural and which is really some kind of quasi-theological basis for a social gospel.

*Prof. H. Hanko*

*THE BIBLE AND ARCHEOLOGY*, by J. A. Thompson; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970; 468 pp., \$5.95.

The study of archeology can be an important aid to Biblical studies. It also has serious limitations. If archeology becomes a tool to "prove" the truth of what Scripture contains, it is more hindrance than help. If however, it is used to shed necessary light on Scripture, it can be very valuable. This book belongs to the latter category. The author very carefully does not allow the integrity and final authority of the Scriptures to be called into question by any archeological research.

After opening with an evaluation of archeology as performed in Bible lands, the author treats "Archeology and the Old Testament," "archeology and the Pre-Christian Centuries," and "Archeology and the New Testament." In three or four areas especially is the book worthwhile. 1) It gives a great deal of help in the translation and explanation of difficult words and passages in Scripture. 2) It gives much information concerning the background of the history of Scripture. 3) It gives explanations for many customs and practices in common use during Scriptural times. 4) It shows the close relationships which existed between the nations surrounding Israel and the nation of the people of God.

Of much benefit to the reader are the many pictures, maps, charts and tables with which the book is filled. The book is not written for the technical scholar but for the child of God who is interested in increasing his knowledge of God's Word. It is highly recommended to all our readers, but especially to our Christian School teachers, Sunday School teachers and ministers. And the book is well worth the low price of \$5.95.

*Prof. H. Hanko*

*THE MAN BORN TO BE KING*, by Dorothy L. Sayers; Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing Co., 1970; 339 pp., \$3.95 (paper).

Dorothy Sayers is a writer of wide ability. Among her achievements are poetry, essays — also on theological subjects and mystery stories. In this book she turns her hand to drama. The book contains a play-cycle of

twelve plays on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These were written for broadcasting over BBC in England.

In a rather lengthy introduction to these plays, the author explains (among other things) her purpose in writing such a series of dramas. Her argument is that after centuries of ecclesiastical and homiletical clichés about the life and death of Christ the horror and shock of how awful and brutal it was no longer staggers us. The crime was immense both because of the complexity of sin on the part of all those responsible for Christ's suffering and crucifixion and because of the shattering truth that God was put to death. (She believes in the divinity of Christ, the atonement and the bodily resurrection.) But she is convinced that the failure of the story to shock us is a sad loss because it was, after all, we ourselves who put Christ to death on a gibbet. And if we, with our nice words, fail to see this horror of the crucifixion, we fail also to see that we have committed the crime of the ages. And to the extent that we fail to see ourselves as guilty of this sin, we fail to see the wonder and power of the atonement of Christ Who died for those who killed Him.

In accomplishing this purpose she is successful.

Each individual play is introduced with "notes" in which she describes the "characters" in this amazing drama. These notes are of unusual interest. On the whole they are remarkably well done. John comes through as the "intuitive" disciple who was the first to believe the resurrection. Caiaphas is described as an almost unbelievably foul man. Her characterization of Judas is extremely interesting.

Nevertheless, the theology of the author is not sound. She rejects, for example, the truth of providence and predestination and presents Jesus as seeking Judas' salvation to the very end. Nor is she always honest with the gospel narratives. She admits this and gives two reasons for it. The first is that she does not believe in the infallibility of Scripture. The second is that she must play fast and loose with the Scripture given for the sake of the dramatic production. It is this second reason which is disturbing in this connection. It is probably the very real (though unintentional, for the author) proof that one ultimately cannot and surely may not present the life of Him Who was God with us in dramatic form.

*Prof. H. Hanko*

*A Voice From America About America*, R. T. Kuiper (Translated by E. R. Post); Heritage Hall Publications, Number One; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.; 120 pp., \$3.50.

This is the first Heritage Hall Publication of Calvin College and Seminary Library. What does this mean? Permit me to quote an explanatory note which appears in this little book:

Heritage Hall of the Calvin College and Seminary Library includes in its holdings materials which cover

a wide range of interest, but specializes in documents pertaining to the Reformed faith as it comes to expression in the Christian Reformed Church.

The purpose of the projected series — Heritage Hall Publications — is to make available to the English reader translations of significant selected writings which portray the history and activities of that Church. It is hoped that they will enable the general reader to obtain a clearer perspective of the Church which maintains Calvin College and Seminary. These publications appear too in the hope that the academic world will want to use the Heritage Hall materials for scholarly research on Dutch-Americans in general and on the Christian Reformed Church in particular.

As to this first publication of Heritage Hall, it is not really a book on church history; but as an account of circumstances in the Holland, Michigan area during the early history of the Christian Reformed Church, it furnishes interesting — and, to an extent, valuable — background information. Let me quote the summary which appears on the dust jacket:

The Graafschap Christian Reformed Church, begun in 1847, was one of the first churches established by the Dutch immigrants in western Michigan. By 1879, when the Reverend Roelof T. Kuiper arrived as its new pastor, the church was able to provide him with a comfortable parsonage and a reasonably good salary. Still, it must have been something of a sacrifice for Rev. Kuiper to leave Wildervank, the Netherlands, where he had served for twenty-five years, and take up residence in this distant and unfamiliar country. He was already fifty-three years old, a widower, and the father of seven children. By his own testimony there were many who asked him why he had chosen to leave, and as many more who wanted to know what America was really like.

In *A Voice From America About America*, first published in 1881, Rev. Kuiper attempts to answer those questions. He describes his trip, the appearance of the new country, the occupations available there, civic and governmental conditions, and the considerations to be kept in mind by others who might wish to follow him across the Atlantic. Challenges awaited the immigrant as well as rewards, and Rev. Kuiper tells of both.

The country, the people, and the customs he writes about are nearly a century old, and may seem as foreign to us as they must have seemed to those who first read this account. But today's reader cannot help but be impressed by the faith and the courage exhibited in the lives of this man and his contemporaries. The brief acquaintance with them that this book offers may well contribute to a deeper appreciation of the rich heritage which is ours.

To one who is interested in the background, history, and outlook of the "old settlers," this little book is, I think, more interesting than the above summary might seem to indicate.

Mr. E. R. Post (principal at Grand Rapids Christian in my high school days) has, in my judgment, done a commendable job of translation, though here and there the English rendering is a bit stilted, possibly in the interest of accuracy. Recommended. H.C.H.

*Exposition of Psalms* (New Reprint Edition), H. C. Leupold; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.; 1010 pp., \$8.95.

This is another expository work on the Old Testament by the well-known Lutheran scholar, Dr. Leupold. It is a rather extensive work, though not overly extensive in comparison with the vast amount of Scripture involved in the Book of Psalms.

In the opinion of this reviewer, a commentary on Psalms is by no means an easy undertaking. One of the big problems facing the expositor is that of doing justice to the personal, subjective, poetic element in the Psalms and at the same time doing justice to the deep and rich content. For the Psalms are by no means shallow, poetic out-gushings of feeling; but they are rich and warm and deeply spiritual just because they are the inspired expression of deep and rich truths. Another not insignificant problem for the expositor is that of preserving the unity of thought in the Psalms while doing justice to the details of meaning in the individual verses of each Psalm. It is also the opinion of this reviewer that Dr. Leupold does not completely solve these problems in his commentary. At least, my general impression is that this is not the author's best commentary. One more negative impression made on this reviewer is that of brevity and of a running commentary, rather than of a thorough and unified work. And a final negative impression is that the author does not do complete justice in his exposition to the sharply antithetical note which abounds in the Psalms.

This review, however, must not end on a negative note. This is a helpful commentary. The approach of the author toward Scripture is a believing one and a very sober one. There is a serious and largely successful effort to let the Word of God speak, to make plain the meaning of the text by letting Scripture interpret Scripture. Pastors, Bible teachers, and other serious students of Holy Scripture can certainly profit from Dr. Leupold's commentary.

Recommended for discreet use.

H.C.H.

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Before the face of God there is no Arminian. Or who ever heard anyone utter an Arminian prayer like this: "I thank thee, God, that Thou didst wait until it pleased me to come, and that Thou didst knock until I was good enough to open my heart for Thee, and that Thou gavest me grace when I decided to receive it?" Yet why should not a man express before the face of God what he loudly and boldly proclaims to man? The simple answer is: because before God we cannot lie!

## *Pages from the Past*

# **Believers and Their Seed**

The Organic Idea in Scripture  
(continuation of Chapter IX)

*Rev. Herman Hoeksema*

But if you hold fast to the organic idea, then all the difficulties disappear. Then you have here the one people which is nevertheless twofold; one vineyard which nevertheless brings forth a twofold fruit. From the viewpoint of its good kernel, that vineyard is the object of God's favor. For the sake of that good kernel the Lord cultivates that vineyard. He does all that there is to be done to a vineyard. Thus the Lord did with Israel. Therefore He also expected good fruits. Nor was He disappointed in that expectation by that good kernel. But at the same time there grew in that vineyard a great many bad branches, which grew so luxuriantly that it sometimes appeared as though there was nothing good in the entire vineyard. Thus it was in the time of Isaiah. From that viewpoint now — not from the viewpoint of that good and elect kernel — but from the viewpoint of that reprobate element, the vineyard is here addressed. Also that evil element in Israel, along with the good kernel, was cultivated. In the outward sense of the word they had together received the same labor. They had the same sign of the covenant; they were in the same manner delivered from Egypt; they had the same giving of the law, the same fathers, the same covenants. They had the same temple, the same altars, the same offerings. They dwelt in the same land and they enjoyed the same benefits of the land. The same prophets were sent unto them, and the same word was directed to them. And all these things caused the same outcome to be expected: the bringing forth of good fruits of righteousness. But that reprobate element in Israel brought forth the wild grapes of unrighteousness. Therefore the Lord shall presently destroy and curse His vineyard, considered now from this viewpoint. But when all this has happened, has God then cast away His people? Indeed, you know better. God never casts away His people. The vineyard may be pruned and sometimes apparently wholly destroyed; the remnant according to the election of grace is always preserved. And the Lord receives the expected fruit from His own work.

Nor do you find it to be different with the presentation of Holy Writ in the New Testament. You find this presentation in John 15:1, 2: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Surely, there is a broader view of

this passage possible. Yet there can be no doubt that the Savior here has in view His people as it exists in the world and manifests itself outwardly. And how will you escape Arminianism, if, when reading these words, you do not hold fast to the organic idea, if you do not constantly apply to God's covenant people the proper figure of the vine and the branches as it actually manifests itself to you in nature? Are there then living and good branches in Christ which shall nevertheless be cut off presently? Are there then those who were once ingrafted into Christ by a true faith and who nevertheless shall be rejected because they did not bear fruit in Christ? You do not get one step farther away from Arminianism by clinging to the idea that the covenant is according to its essence nothing else than a promise, and that it now depends upon those who are born and raised in the covenant historically to appropriate that promise. After all, that entire presentation is, in the first place, itself Arminian. But, in the second place, along this line you do not explain the fact either that there are branches in Christ, the vine, which are cut off and cast into the fire. But that is precisely what you find in the natural vine. You have branches there which are indeed in the vine, which also draw their life-sap out of the vine, and which nevertheless bear no fruit. Now thus you find the situation also with God's people in the world. It is one organism. But in that one organism you always have the good kernel and the rejected shell. In what sense also those covenant children which never bear fruit are nevertheless in the organism of the body of Christ here on earth and therefore may be called branches in the vine; and what influence proceeds from that organism upon the non-fruit-bearing members; — these are questions for later consideration. For the moment, let it be sufficient to remind you that Scripture indeed makes proper mention of such an influence, and that the children of the kingdom who are cast out are not to be placed on the one line with the heathen. But fact is that only thus can you understand the Lord's figure of the vine and its twofold branches. There are in the one organism branches which bear fruit and branches which bear no fruit. Thus there are in the one people of God also Israelites according to the flesh and Israelites according to the Spirit and of the promise.

Scripture offers the same presentation in Romans 11:17-21: "And if some of the branches be broken off,

and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." Also here you have the same presentation. The olive tree is the people of God's covenant, the church. From a natural point of view that olive tree was Israel of the old dispensation as a nation. Israel was the historical manifestation of that covenant people in Old Testament times. From that point of view the apostle here calls the Israelites even the natural branches of that olive tree. But in that olive tree not all is genuine and fruit-bearing. There were also in that tree branches which never bore fruit. Therefore God cut off those natural branches which were not spiritual, fruit-bearing branches. The tree indeed remained. The root was never rooted out. For God cares for His church. And out of all nations there are now ingrafted in the tree others in the places where other and natural branches were cut off. But also thus there always remain branches in that tree which are nevertheless again cut off. From thence arises the very appropriate admonition not to boast, understanding well that since God spared not the natural branches, He also could indeed not spare us.

That this is so finds its reason in this, that it has pleased God to have His covenant upon earth run in the line of fleshly generations, while there are nevertheless those among the children of believers who were not elected. Surely, there are also other reasons, but in this lies the chief cause. If God had seen to it that only the elect were members of the church on earth, this figure of God's people in the world would not have been possible, could not have been used. But now God, according to His own purpose, takes up into His covenant according to its outward form all the fleshly children, while nevertheless only a remnant is saved. From thence arises this duality in that unity.

From this same viewpoint also, the kingdom of heaven on earth is likened unto a net which is cast into the sea and which gathers all kinds of fish, according to our Savior's parable. That net cannot be a figure of the preaching of the Word. That preaching just exactly does not gather all who come into contact with it; on the contrary, the preaching makes separation, and it makes more separation according as the Word is more purely proclaimed. But this is indeed the case with the historical development of God's covenant in the line of successive generations. Such a net was not only cast into the sea, but was drawn through the sea, made a path through the sea. Naturally, then, everything that was in the path of that net was also gathered in the

net. Thus it is also with God's covenant. And just as there are bad and good fishes that come into the net, just as it is unavoidable with that manner of fishing that good and evil fishes are gathered, so it is also unavoidable that when the Lord lets His covenant run in the line of successive generations, while not all in those generations head for head, are elect children of the covenant, — it is unavoidable that a reprobate element is gathered along with the elect kernel. Presently, at the shore of eternity, the angels will separate those two elements finally and forever. But here on earth they are found together in the same sphere; and they have everything, in common, except grace. (to be cont.)

#### IN MEMORIAM

On May 12, 1970, it pleased the Lord to call home unto Himself our beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother,

MRS. JAMES DEN BESTEN

at the age of 74 years.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24

Mr. James Den Besten

Mr. and Mrs. John Den Besten

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Den Besten

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew VanDen Top

Miss Adrianna Den Besten

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Kamminga

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Den Besten

19 grandchildren      5 great-grandchildren

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to one of our elders, Mr. Alvin Rau and his family in the death of his mother

MRS. ROSINA RAU.

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." (Ps. 145:18).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.  
Dewey Engelsma, Sec'y.

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid of The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of a faithful member,

MRS. B. KETT,

whom the Lord took home on June 1, 1970, and hereby express our sympathy to the bereaved family. May our Covenant God comfort with His Word and Spirit in the assurance that "— all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28).

Mrs. T. Newhof, Pres.  
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y.

**ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENT**

On the 25th of June, our beloved parents,  
MR. AND MRS. JAMES VER HEY,  
celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Covenant Father for the blessings bestowed upon them and us these many years. As they have in the past, may they in the remainder of their days experience that — "The Lord is good: His mercy is everlasting: and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5.)

Their grateful children:  
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Schnyders  
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Miersma  
Mr. & Mrs. Everett Hofstee  
Mr. & Mrs. Art Ver Hey  
Mr. & Mrs. Jake Jabaay  
23 grandchildren  
2 great-grandchildren

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Mary-Martha Society of the Redlands Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere and heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Estella Van Uffelen in the recent death of her father,

MR. HENRY KRIKKE.

May the God of all grace comfort the sorrowing by His Word and Spirit.

Rev. C. Hanko, Pres.  
Mrs. Albert Karsemeyer, Sec'y.

**CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY***Seminary and Pre-seminary Students*

All young men desiring to begin their studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting which will be held D.V. on Friday, August 7, 1970 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The qualifications requisite to enrolling in the seminary course are:

1. You must present a letter from your consistory certifying that you are upright in walk and pure in doctrine.

2. You must present a certificate of health, signed by a reputable physician.

3. You must be a graduate from high school, being able to show that you have completed a one year course in General History and Church History, and that you have completed the following college courses: Latin-2 years, Greek-2 years, German-2 years, Dutch-2 years, Philosophy-1 year, Psychology-1 year, and Logic-1 semester.

The qualifications to enter the pre-seminary department are the same as the above except "3" should read, "a graduate from high school."

In event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting.

Rev. J. Kortering, Secretary  
1551 Wilson Ave. S.W.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

**News From Our Churches**

June 15, 1970

It seems that the choir of Covenant Christian High, under the direction of Mr. R. Petersen is acquiring some renown. On May 26 they travelled to Kalamazoo to perform there in a program sponsored by the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. And on May 19 they went even further — out of state, no less. The Ladies Society of South Holland's church sponsored a program in that church's auditorium. The feature attraction was Covenant's a cappella choir.

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The schools have again been closed for the summer season, as some of you mothers have probably already had reason to regret. June church bulletins carried many announcements of commencement exercises. One of our ministers actually spoke at two such programs — and at nearly opposite sides of the continent. Rev. D.

Engelsma first spoke on "Going on in Confidence" at our school in Loveland. This was not, strictly speaking, a *graduation* program, since our school there has, at present, only grades 1 through 6; but the similarity is evident enough. Then Rev. Engelsma also accepted the invitation to speak at Covenant's graduation exercises, a visit made possible, of course, by his attendance at the meeting of Synod in Grand Rapids.

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The pre-synodical prayer service was held on June 2, at First Church in Grand Rapids. Rev. C. Hanko preached the sermon from Ephesians 2. First's bulletin noted that "we expect, D. V., to see also Rev. Elliott from Jamaica at this service." Southwest offered this added information, that "Rev. Clinton Elliott will arrive in Chicago at the O'Hare Airport, D. V., on Mon-

day, June 1, at 2:15 P.M. He will fly by way of the Bahama Islands on the Maiden Flight of Air Jamaica, Inc., to Chicago . . . . Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers intend to meet him in Chicago and bring him home with them." And, we'll have to give credit for the last word in this matter to our church in Holland. "Rev. C. J. Elliott did not receive his passport in time for the trip last Monday and now plans to come later in the month."

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You were promised some news from the schools this summer. Well, it's summer; so here it is. For this issue, we'd like to pass on some information and a photograph from Loveland, Colorado, both of which were graciously provided by a couple of members of Loveland's School Board. The picture below is of Loveland's student body (grades 1 through 6) in their classroom (in the church basement) with Miss B. Hoekstra (teacher and administrator).



In March of 1959, a group of 11 men met to discuss the possibility of establishing a Protestant Reformed Christian school in Loveland. Two years of preparation led to opening of school in the fall of 1961, with 5 grades under one teacher, Miss Ruth Kuiper. This coming fall, there is an anticipated enrollment of 31 students, an expansion to 8 grades, and, for the first time, 2 teachers. Miss Beverly Hoekstra will teach the upper 4 grades and Miss Barb Zandstra, teacher of grade 3 for the last 2 years at Adams in Grand Rapids, will teach the lower 4 grades.

The School Board has, with the assistance of the church pamphlet committee, distributed pamphlets to hundreds of families in the Loveland area, giving grounds for their support of a Christian school over against the public schools. The result has been that they now receive the support of the Reformed Church of Fort Collins; and the pastor of the 4th St. Baptist Church sends his child to their school. Next fall, 8 of 31 students will be from non-Protestant Reformed churches.

"School" will still be the church basement, but they'll be using more of it. They look forward, though, to the day when they will have their own school building. They plan to, sometime in the future, build on the approximate 2-acre plot of land adjacent to the church building.

Let's conclude with this quote: "We have seen the blessing of the Lord on our endeavors, and proceed in the confidence that He is our help and strength, and that the small beginning that we have seen, He surely will prosper."

News like this, we think, is interesting. Many *Standard Bearer* readers are, likely, unaware of what's happening in Loveland; and some might even be unaware of the fact that we have a school there. We would like, therefore, for the above material, to thank especially Mr. Frank Van Baren. And we would also like to encourage others with similar news to make use of that address listed in the front of this magazine.

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From the bulletin of Southeast Church we learn that Rev. Schipper has declined the call from our church in Doon, Iowa. After Rev. C. Hanko declined the call from Randolph, Wisconsin, that church made another trio consisting of Revs. R. Harbach, G. Van Baren, and B. Woudenberg. And then there's an acceptance which, because of its momentous importance, is, no doubt, already general knowledge; but it gives us great pleasure, nonetheless, to report that Rev. G. Lubbers has accepted the call to serve as missionary on the island of Jamaica.

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We still have a lot of church news left. Next month's news ought to be easy - it's half written already. By that time, though, to call it "news" would be misnaming. How about "olds?" Better that than writing a whole new column.

D.R.D.